

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 42, 48, 60, 62, 63, 106, and 109 of the subject application are pending. Applicant has amended claims 1, 9, 29, 34, 42, 48, 106, and 109 in order more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has not added or deleted any claims. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 42, 48, 60, 62, 63, 106, and 109 are presently being examined.

In view of the following Amendment and Response, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejections made in the outstanding Office Action.

Support for the Amendments

Applicant has amended claims 1, 9, 29, 34, 42, 48, 106, and 109 in order more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of applicant's layered catalyst composite comprising a first layer and a second layer. Specifically, applicant has amended independent claims 1, 34, 106, and 109 and the claims dependent thereon, to recite that the first layer further comprises a NOx sorbent component and that the SOx sorbent component in the second layer has a higher free energy of formation at 350°C than the NOx sorbent component in the first layer. This amendment is supported at, for example, applicant's specification at page 16, line 21, to page 17, line 10 and page 17, line 16, to page 18, line 5. Applicant has also amended dependent claims 9, 29, 42, and 48 to correct the dependencies thereof. Applicant has entered these amendments in order to overcome the Examiner's rejections.

These amendments to the claims are fully supported in the specification as originally filed, and thus no new matter is introduced by these amendments in accord with 35 U.S.C. Section 132. Accordingly, applicant requests entry of these amendments.

Election/Restrictions

The Examiner has made final the Restriction Requirement.

Specification and Abstract

Applicant notes with appreciation that the Examiner has withdrawn the objection to the specification and Abstract.

Rejection of Claim 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 112, second paragraph.

Applicant notes with appreciation that the Examiner has withdrawn the rejection of claim 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 112, second paragraph.

Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 48, 106, and 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as Anticipated by or, in the Alternative, under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as Obvious over *Hu et al.*

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation that the Examiner has withdrawn the rejection of claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 48, 106, and

109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as obvious over United States Patent no. 5,597,771 (*Hu et al.*).

Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 42, 48, 106 and 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as obvious over *Feeley et al.*

The Examiner has issued a new grounds of rejection. The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 42, 48, 106 and 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being obvious over United States Patent no. 5,792,436 (*Feeley et al.*). The Examiner states that *Feeley et al.* discloses in Example 3 a catalyst comprising a 1st underlayer containing an oxidation catalyst, such as platinum supported on alumina, and a 2nd SO_x-sorbing overlayer, such as an alkali metal and/or manganese oxide supported on a 2nd support (col. 6, lines 39-41 and 47-51 and claims 6-9). The Examiner states that *Feeley et al.* further discloses a method for making the catalyst comprising (Example 3, sections A and B) combining a solution of platinum and a solution of alumina powder to provide a slurry of particles; dipping a cordierite, honeycomb-type substrate into this slurry of particles so as to "washcoat" the Pt/Al₂O₃ onto the honeycomb-type substrate, and drying and calcining the resulting honeycomb-type substrate supporting the Pt/Al₂O₃; (example 3, section C) mixing the SO_x sorbent and the alumina together and adding water to this mixture to produce a slurry of fine particles of SO_x sorbent/Al₂O₃; dipping the Pt/Al₂O₃ layered substrate into this slurry of SO_x sorbent/Al₂O₃ so that the SO_x sorbent/Al₂O₃ is coated over the Pt/Al₂O₃ layer, and calcining the resulting catalytic composition to form a substrate containing a Pt/Al₂O₃ underlayer and a SO_x sorbent/Al₂O₃ overlayer, in a manner rendering obvious the steps recited in applicants' claim 109.

The Examiner argues that the difference between applicants' claim 109 and example 3 in *Feeley et al.* is that applicants' claims recite that the SOx sorbent is selected from MgAl2O4, MnO, MnO2, and Li2O, whereas *Feeley et al.* discloses in example 3 the use of SrO as the SOx sorbent. The Examiner maintains that *Feeley et al.* (col. 11, lines 27-35) reports that the SOx sorbent may be selected from a variety of compounds including an alkali metal or an oxide of manganese. The Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to modify example 3 in *Feeley et al.* by substituting an alkali metal or an oxide of manganese in lieu of the SrO to arrive at applicant's catalyst and method for making the same because *Feeley et al.* (col. 11, lines 27-35) states that the SrO of Example 3 and the alkali metals and manganese oxides of col. 11, lines 27-35 are functionally equivalent SOx sorbents. Applicant's claims as amended obviate the Examiner's rejection.

In summary, *Feeley et al.* does not teach applicant's concept of a "basicity" gradient in a layered catalyst composite. Applicant's layered catalyst composite comprises a less basic layer (Mg, Mn, Li, etc.) in front of a more basic layer (Ba, Cs, K, etc.). The less basic layer preferentially removes SOx from a gaseous stream before the stream reaches the more basic NOx sorption layer, thereby protecting the NOx sorption layer. When the SOx sorption layer becomes saturated with SOx, the deSOx cycle is begun. The basicity gradient from the top layer to the bottom layer or axially from the front layer to the rear layer are the essence of applicant's invention. *Feeley et al.* does not teach applicant's concept of a "basicity" gradient in a layered catalyst composite. *Feeley et al.* discloses a Sr/Al layer on the top (high basicity) and a Pt/Al layer (low basicity) on the bottom layer.

As set out above, applicant has amended independent claims 1, 34, 106, and 109 and the claims dependent thereon, to recite that the first layer further comprises a NOx sorbent component and that the SOx sorbent component in the second layer has a

higher free energy of formation at 350°C than the NOx sorbent component in the first layer. This amendment to the claims is supported applicant's specification as follows:

As set out above, the present invention employs a second or top layer of a SOx sorbent component which acts as a sulfur oxide absorbing layer to selectively and reversibly absorb sulfur oxides over nitrogen oxides and thereby provide a sulfur guard for the NOx trap component/three-way conversion catalyst. The SOx sorbent component in the SOx absorbing layer is a metal oxide which is less basic than the metal oxide in the NOx absorbing layer. The less basic SOx sorbent component forms SOx complexes (sulfates) that are less stable than the SOx complexes formed with the more basic NOx trap components. The SOx sorbent components of the present invention have a free energy of formation from about 0 to about -90 Kcal/mole at 350°C., preferably from about 0 to about -60 Kcal/mole at 350°C., and more preferably from about -30 to about -55 Kcal/mole at 350°C. The free energy of formation is the free-energy change for a reaction in which a substance in its standard state is formed from its elements in their standard states. The free energy of a system is the internal energy of a system minus the product of its temperature and its entropy, that is $G = H - TS$, where G is the Gibbs free energy, H is enthalpy, T is absolute temperature, and S is entropy. Figure 1 shows the free energy of formation in Kcal/mole at 350°C. for a number of metal oxides reacting to form nitrates, sulfates, carbonates, nitrites, and sulfites. In general, metals having a free energy of formation with NOx greater than about 0 Kcal/mole at 350°C. (i.e., 10 Kcal/mole) will not readily adsorb NOx while metals having a free energy of formation with SOx lower than about -90 Kcal/mole at 350°C. (i.e., -100 Kcal/mole) will form very stable sulfate but not readily desorb SOx. (applicant's specification at page 16, line 21, to page 17, line 10)

The top layer comprises SOx absorbing components which will not substantially absorb NOx under the operating conditions, e.g., from about 300°C. to about 600°C. The medium temperature regeneration

SO_x traps selectively absorb SO_x so that the SO_x traps will not be saturated with nitrate salts in the lean mode and consequently lose their SO_x-trap capacity. The SO_x sorbent component is capable of selectively absorbing SO_x over NO_x in a temperature range from about 100°C. to about 600°C. and capable of desorbing SO_x in a temperature range from about 500°C. to about 700°C. Preferably, the SO_x sorbent component is capable of selectively absorbing SO_x over NO_x in a temperature range from about 150°C. to about 475°C., more preferably in a temperature range from about 200°C. to about 450°C., and most preferably in a temperature range from about 250°C. to about 450°C. Preferably, the SO_x sorbent component is capable of desorbing SO_x over NO_x in a temperature range from about 500°C. to about 700°C., preferably in a temperature range from about 520°C. to about 658°C., more preferably in a temperature range from about 535°C. to about 675°C., and most preferably in a temperature range from about 550°C. to about 650°C. Nonlimiting illustrative examples of SO_x sorbent components may be selected from the group consisting of oxides and aluminum oxides of lithium, magnesium, calcium, manganese, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc, and silver. More preferred SO_x sorbent components may be selected from the group consisting of MgO, MgAl₂O₄ (or hydrotalcite with MgO/Al₂O₃ from 9/1 to 1/9), MnO, MnO₂, and Li₂O. The most preferred SO_x sorbent components are MgO and Li₂O. (applicant's specification at page 17, line 16, to page 18, line 5)

Applicant's invention, as defined in the amended claims, pertains to a layered catalyst composite comprising a first layer and a second layer. The first layer comprises a first support, a NO_x sorbent component, and a first platinum component. The second layer comprises a second support and a SO_x sorbent component-selected from the group consisting of MgAl₂O₄, MnO, MnO₂, and Li₂O. The SO_x sorbent component has a higher free energy of formation at 350°C than the NO_x sorbent component.

The present invention relates to a thermally stable, layered catalyst composite of the type generally referred to as a three-way conversion catalyst (TWC). TWC catalysts are polyfunctional because they have the ability to substantially simultaneously catalyze the oxidation of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide and the reduction of nitrogen oxides. The layered catalyst composites of the present invention have a sulfur oxide absorbing layer before or above a nitrogen oxide absorbing layer. The sulfur oxide absorbing layer selectively and reversibly absorbs sulfur oxides over nitrogen oxides and thereby alleviates sulfur oxide poisoning of the three-way conversion catalyst. Because SO_x poisoning of the three-way conversion catalysts is minimized, the layered catalyst composites are able to maintain long term activity and effectively oxidize hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide and reduce nitrogen oxide compounds. (applicant's specification at page 13, line 24, to page 14, line 3)

The *Feeley et al.* reference discloses a method for removing pollutants comprising nitrogen oxides and sorbable components comprising sulfur oxides and phosphorus oxides from a lean gaseous stream. The method comprises (a) in a trapping period, passing the gaseous stream within a sorbing temperature range through a catalyzed trap member comprising a combination of a regenerable sorbent material and an oxidation catalyst, and sorbing at least some of the sorb/able components into the sorbent material to thereby provide a sorbable component-depleted gaseous stream exiting the catalyzed trap member; (b) in a desorbing period, introducing a combustible component into the gaseous stream upstream of the catalyzed trap member and combusting the combustible component in the presence of the oxidation catalyst, the combustible component being introduced in an amount which is limited in order to maintain the bulk composition of the gaseous stream lean but which is enough to heat at least a portion of the sorbent material to within a desorbing temperature range to thereby thermally desorb the sorbable component from the sorbent material and provide

a sorbable component-enriched gaseous stream exiting the catalyzed trap member; and (c) passing the sorbable component-depleted stream to a catalytic treatment zone for the abatement of the pollutants and by-passing the sorbable component-enriched stream around the catalytic treatment zone. *Feeley et al.* at col. 15, lines 15-44

As set out above, applicant has amended claims 1, 34, 106, and 109 to recite that the first layer further comprises a NO_x sorbent component and that the SO_x sorbent component in the second layer has a higher free energy of formation at 350°C than the NO_x sorbent component in the first layer. *Feeley et al.* does not teach applicant's concept of a "basicity" gradient in a layered catalyst composite. Accordingly, the Examiner's rejection of claims 1, 2, 9, 20, 21, 29, 34, 42, 48, 106 and 109 under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being obvious over *Feeley et al.* should be withdrawn.

Obviousness of a composition or process must be predicated on something more than it would be obvious "to try" the particular component recited in the claims or the possibility it will be considered in the future, having been neglected in the past. *Ex parte Argabright et al.* (POBA 1967) 161 U.S.P.Q. 703. There is usually an element of "obvious to try" in any research endeavor, since such research is not undertaken with complete blindness but with some semblance of a chance of success. "Obvious to try" is not a valid test of patentability. *In re Mercier* (CCPA 1975) 515 F2d 1161, 185 U.S.P.Q. 774; *Hybritech Inc. v. Monoclonal Antibodies. Inc.* (CAFC 1986) 802 F2d 1367, 231 U.S.P.Q. 81; *Ex parte Old* (BPAI 1985) 229 U.S.P.Q. 196; *In re Geiger* (CAFC 1987) 815 F2d 686, 2 U.S.P.Q.2d 1276. *In re Dow Chemical Co.* (CAFC 1988) F2d, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1529. Patentability determinations based on that as a test are contrary to statute. *In re Antonie* (CCPA 1977) 559 F2d 618, 195 U.S.P.Q. 6; *In re Goodwin et al.* (CCPA 1978) 576 F2d 375, 198 U.S.P.Q. 1; *In re Tomlinson et al.* (CCPA 1966) 363 F2d 928, 150 U.S.P.Q. 623. A rejection based on

the opinion of the Examiner that it would be "obvious to try the chemical used in the claimed process which imparted novelty to the process does not meet the requirement of the statute (35 U.S.C. 103) that the issue of obviousness be based on the subject matter as a whole. *In re Dien* (CCPA 1967) 371 F2d 886, 152 U.S.P.Q. 550; *In re Wiaains* (CCPA 1968) 397 F2d 356, 158 U.S.P.Q. 199; *In re Yates* (CCPA 1981) 663 F2d 1054, 211 U.S.P.Q. 1149. Arguing that mere routine experimentation was involved overlooks the second sentence of 35 USC 103. *In re Saether* (CCPA 1974) 492 F2d 849, 181 U.S.P.Q. 36. The issue is whether the experimentation is within the teachings of the prior art. *In re Waymouth et al.* (CCPA 1974) 499 F2d 1273, 182 U.S.P.Q. 290. The fact that the prior art does not lead one skilled in the art to expect the process used to produce the claimed product would fail does not establish obviousness. *In re Dow Chem. Co.* (CAFC 1988) 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1529.

The provisions of Section 103 must be followed realistically to develop the factual background against which the Section 103 determination must be made. It is not proper within the framework of Section 103 to pick and choose from any one reference only so much of it as will support a given position to the exclusion of other parts necessary for the full appreciation of what such reference fairly suggest to one of ordinary skill in the art. The references of record fail to teach or suggest appellant's invention as a whole.

Allowance of Claims 60, 62, and 63

The Examiner has not rejected claims 60, 62, and 63 either under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) or under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) on the basis that there is nothing in *Feeley et al.* teaching or suggesting that a top layer comprising supported MgAl₂O₄ be

provided over the bottom layer (i.e., the 1st layer) and middle layer (i.e., the 2nd layer).

In view of the foregoing Amendment and Response, applicants request reconsideration pursuant to 37 C.F.R. Section 112 and allowance of the claims pending in this application. Applicant requests the Examiner to telephone the undersigned attorney should the Examiner have any questions or comments which might be most expeditiously handled by a telephone conference. No fee is deemed necessary in connection with the filing of this Amendment and Response. If any fee is required, however, authorization is hereby given to charge the amount of such fee to Deposit Account No. 18-1843.

Respectfully submitted,

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